



City of Rockville

MEMORANDUM

January 12, 2004

TO: HDC

FROM: Cindy Kebba, Staff

SUBJECT: Addendum to Staff Report, Chestnut Lodge Community Center

At the December 18th HDC meeting, the record was left open on the evaluation for historical, architectural, or cultural significance of the Chloethiel Woodard Smith Community Center at Chestnut Lodge. The owner of the Chestnut Lodge Properties, Inc. of Bethesda, Associated Companies (the Washington Waldorf school continues to have some financial interest based on the number of residences that are approved), submitted additional testimony on Friday, January 9, 2004. Staff is providing this addendum in response. The staff recommendation remains unchanged.

1. *The Environmental Guidelines*, adopted by the Mayor and Council in July 1999, provide the directive to evaluate the significance of "any structure older than 50 years of age or possessing architectural significance, or a site associated with a person or event of importance to local, state, or national history or development..." The Community Center meets this test for evaluation of architectural and historical significance, as illustrated in the MHT form prepared by staff.
2. The MHT form prepared by staff illustrates the architectural, historical and cultural significance of the Community Center in terms of the long-standing relationship between the architect and the client. Ms. Smith is well known for planning and apparently produced a Master Plan for development at the Chestnut Lodge mental health institution for the Bullards. The buildings constructed from Smith's design for this institution between 1955 and 1977 include the Community Center (1954, 1958, 1972), the Research Center (1956), the Nurses Quarters (1958) and the Gymnasium (1977). Three of these buildings remain and each one is a good illustration of Modern design and the decorative use of structural materials.
3. The expansion of the Community Center illustrates the architect's control of the design as the program shifted. Through modest design changes, Smith was able to maintain the sense of a unified structure, even while additions more than doubled the building's size. Major

elements, such as the courtyards on the east and west sides, were given additional importance as part of the entry axis. Significant relationships between indoor and outdoor space was maintained even while the program required a distinction between restricted service space (kitchen storage and preparation areas) and the open glazed areas for the patient community.

4. When evaluations were made of Chestnut Lodge in 1974 and in 1997, the Community Center was well under 50 years old and the focus was on the front 8 acres. The 1997 evaluation was actually a modification of the 1974 proposal, so it is reasonable that the focus at that time was also on the originally-proposed environmental setting of 8 acres. The 1997 evaluation by Ward Bucher, Architects (p.8) states that detailed survey work for the study was only completed on buildings, structures and site features built before 1948.
5. This evaluation was submitted through citizen sponsorship, effective prior to Associated Properties actually purchasing the property. Staff typically will not present an evaluation for historical significance unless requested by the owner, directed by Mayor & Council, or triggered by a demolition permit request. Through permitting review, 20th century resources are now regularly coming under scrutiny for historical significance. At the point when an owner would have applied for a demolition permit for the Community Center, staff would have presented an evaluation for historical significance, such as is being currently undertaken.